1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

582

Cross-cousin marriage

It has already been said (page 234) that a very high proportion of marriages are cross-cousin marriages, and that such unions formed 54 per cent. of the Hill Maria marriages into which I enquired. The proportion is not much less among the Bison-horn Marias. Such marriages are considered the most seemly, both because the family which has given a daughter to another family in marriage in one generation should have this obligation repaid by getting her daughter back as a wife for a son of the next generation, and because such family arrangements obviate the necessity of paying the much heavier bride-price required for getting a bride from a new and unrelated family. Such marriages are known as *gudapal* or 'tribe-milk' marriages. The commonest form is marriage between a daughter and her mother's brother's son (brother being again used in the extended sense). But it has also been extended to cover marriages between a girl and her father's sister's son and a son and his mother's brother's daughter, which merely mean the borrowing of a wife from the same family for two successive generations; in such cases the predominant consideration, apart from the wishes of the bridegroom and bride, is the smaller bride-price which will be demanded by relations so close in affinity. Moreover, it is a reflection on parents if, when a girl is mature, no marriage is arranged for her and no one asks for her; in such cases it is a recognized right of the parents to ask either the mother's brother's son or the father's sister's son to carry her off and make her his wife, even though he be already married to some other woman. Similarly a man, especially among the Bison-horn Marias, often acquires as second and third co-wives the younger sisters of his first wife. When a Bison-horn Maria girl marries a man other than her mother's brother's son, the latter, unless he has forfeited his prescriptive right to her by previously marrying another girl, is entitled to compensation from her husband, usually Rs. 5. But the Hill Marias do not observe this. For to them the free choice of the youth and girl is far more important, and when a girl is never compelled to marry against her will, it obviously is unnecessary to compensate anyone if she refuses to marry him. In a similar way Bison-horn Marias consider that a younger brother has a prescriptive right to an elder brother's widow, and he therefore gets Rs. 5 compensation if any other man marries her.

[595]

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No value is set on pre-marital chastity, and it is doubtful whether any girl preserves her virginity until her marriage. The typical attitude was thus expressed by Usendi Moda, the headman of Orcha, already mentioned as one of the men sentenced for the 1916 Orcha murder, and whose family pedigree is given in Appendix

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

836 II. His sister married Gecha Harma of Udala Tondawada, and at the wedding he met Harma's sister Gecha Kowe, and danced with her. They liked each other, and met at other weddings and at koqsar dances, and had sexual intercourse two or three times, which Moda said was necessary in order to ascertain that they were both physically capable. Everyone saw that they were in love, and their wedding followed as soon as the necessary betrothal ceremonies could be completed. But if pre-marital intercourse results in pregnancy, there can be no formal marriage, which the Hill Marias call *marmi* and the Bison-horn *pendul*; the girl states the name of the man responsible, and goes to live in his house without any ceremony, the union being described as *ottur* ('taken away'). A child born to a girl without even *ottur* would be considered as belonging to the clan of the man whom the mother names as the father; and this putative father would be expected to take the mother and child to his house, the union being known to the Hill Marias as *ahene-hattu* ('thus-went'). No stigma attaches to such unions, and the children have exactly the same position and rights as the children of a formal marriage.

588 848

584 Hill Maria parents do not try to interfere in their children's choice of wives and husbands. When a youth and his girl know their minds, each tells his or her parents. Then the youth's parents, with the elders of the village, go, without the youth, with about a rupee's worth of *mahua* spirit (or five bottles) to the girl's parents, taking care to arrive at their house at about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. The father of the youth opens the door of the girl's house, places the liquor bottles inside the threshold and rejoins his party, all of whom sit silent outside the door. The girl's parents then call in some of the elders of their village, and in their presence tell the girl that this liquor has been brought on her account, and ask her if she is willing to go and live with the youth in the village from which the liquor has come. If the girl agrees, the liquor is at once drunk by the parties from the two villages, and the girl's parents entertain the visiting party to supper; if she refuses, the youth's parents take the liquor back to their village. This ceremony is called *talq-da'ina* ('going to ask'). It may take place on any day of the year, Hill Marias recking nothing of auspicious days or omens.

Hill Maria regular betrothal and marriage

[787]

There is a second *talq-da'ina*, generally after an interval of about a year; it sometimes takes place sooner, but it is considered bad form to be too importunate. The youth does not go with his parents even this time; he does not, indeed, meet his betrothed between the first *talq-da'ina* and marriage, as, once a girl's hand

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

Bison Horn Maria

883 quite understood why—but once they realize that the enquirer is not prepared to be deceived they talk fairly freely about them.

883 485 In all these villages there are commodious rest-houses for the use of visitors and officials on tour and when they are unoccupied —and they are but seldom used officially—the boys sleep in them as their dormitories. The boys, however, are not fully organized as among the Murias, but a leader may be appointed—in Mokhpal he was called the Sian, in Chote Timnar the Peda. Sometimes an older man sleeps with them and imposes a rough sort of discipline, fining those who are absent without cause. An old Maria, Sodi Mukha, is said to have been very proud of his management of the dormitory at Mokhpal. 'Originally', I was told in this village, 'the boys used to make their house in the middle of the place and it was theirs. But when Government ordered us to make a rest-house we had to build it not as we wanted it, but as the officers wanted it.'

883 841 The girls sometimes sleep together in the house of a lonely widow, but often have their own building. This is occasionally combined with the corporate menstruation hut. The menstruating women sleep on one side and the unmarried girls on the other. It is more common, however, for such women to sleep at home and to leave the unmarried girls to themselves. They too are not organized as in the Muria ghotul, but they are fined for quarrelling and for non-attendance. Both boys and girls have regular duties. They must all bring wood for the dormitory fire. At marriages and funerals they must collect wood and make leaf-plates. In the evening the boys and girls often meet in some central place or in front of the boys' house and dance and play games.

883 836 The relations between the boys and girls are not organized and disciplined as among the Murias. At marriages the members of the two dormitories may slip away together and sleep in some secluded place. At Penta the boys described how a girl would make a hole in the wall near which she slept. 'Then a boy creeps up and pokes a stick through the hole to wake her, and she creeps out to join him.' At Bara Harmamunda, the boys said that they actually went into the girls' house, though I fancy this is exceptional.

883 The Bison-horn Maria dormitory does not seem to play an important part in the social or religious life of the tribe. It is not established in the mythology; it does not serve as a school of dancing or as a place for initiation into sexual experience; there is no need in these pacific hills for village guard-rooms. Whether at any time the institution existed in a more flourishing form it is now impossible to say.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TWO TYPES OF GHOTUL

I

BEFORE proceeding further it is essential that we distinguish carefully between two different types of ghotul, for these are so sharply differentiated by rule and custom and the psychological conditions of each are so distinct that until this is done we can get no clear picture of the intimate relations between chelik and motiari.

The fundamental principle of the first type of dormitory, which is sometimes called the *jodidār*[1] or 'yoking' ghotul, is that of fidelity to a single partner during the whole of the pre-marital period. Each chelik is paired off with a motiari; he is formally 'married' to her; she may even take the feminine form of his title as her own. Divorce is allowed, though infidelity is punished.

In the second type of ghotul, which is probably a later development of the classic model, any kind of lasting attachment between chelik and motiari is forbidden. No one can say that such and such a motiari is *his* girl; if anyone sleeps with a particular girl for more than three days at a time, he is punished.

In all other matters, whether of discipline, routine, social duty or recreation, there is no difference between the two types of ghotul. We must, however, carefully distinguish them for their sexual customs and psychological conditions.

The *jodidār* ghotul is, I think, the original form of the Muria dormitory. In the first place, it is most widely distributed in the more primitive parganas—the Chota Dongar, Dugal and Karangal—and in the neighbourhood of the Abujhmar Mountains. It has retained its place most successfully among the Jhoria, who are undoubtedly the oldest of the Muria groups. Secondly, the Muria themselves describe the other type of ghotul as a modern improvement intended to eliminate scandals and the danger of pregnancy. The change from one type to the other is still going on. At Karagaon, which was formerly

FIG. 57. Carving on the pillars of the ghotul at Almer

[1] A *jodi* or *jori* is the word used for a life-long friend, yoke-fellow or husband and wife. A *jodi* is something definitely more than a temporary lover. It is the person yoked to whom one will pull the heavy plough of life. See V. Elwin and S. Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Bombay, 1944), pp. 240f.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

a *jodidār* ghotul, a pregnancy scandal caused the chelik and motiari to adopt the other rule of partnership. Twenty years ago, Masora was a *jodidār* ghotul; today its members insist on change. I believe that originally all over the ghotul area the dormitories were of the older type; then in order to avoid the scandals and elopements that naturally arose from such intense and lasting attachments, and as a result of the belief that conception was less likely when the cycle of coitus was frequently broken, the rules were changed.

The ghotul, therefore, gives no support to those who believe in what Westermarck called the 'hypothesis of primitive promiscuity'. Promiscuity is the last thing permitted in the *jodidār* ghotul. It might even be argued that it is the result of culture-contact, for the ghotul in the neighbourhood of towns and schools, or along the roads, are generally of the modern, promiscuous, type.

This gradual change from one tradition to another probably accounts for the very haphazard distribution of the two types at the present time. The old tradition persists in the neighbourhood of the Abujhmar and among the Jhoria; elsewhere there is no rule. Here and there throughout the whole area, *jodidār* ghotul survive in the midst of dormitories which, as the result of scandal or example, have changed their rules. In the Kongur Pargana, for example, More Berma, Kanhargaon and Gorma are ghotul of the old type surrounded by others, as are Chimri and Morenga in the Bangoli Pargana. At the present time, the newer type of ghotul seems to be in the majority; out of the 2000 married men examined, 720 had grown up in *jodidār* dormitories, and 1280 in the others, while out of 347 dormitories of which I have information on this point 269 have adopted the new rules, 78 retaining the older customs.

II

In the *jodidār* ghotul, the pairing-off of chelik and motiari in a more or less permanent relationship, only to be dissolved by the marriage or death of one partner, is taken very seriously. In most villages there is a custom of the ghotul marriage, which is celebrated after the children have attained ghotul maturity and received their titles. In Metawand the chelik gave me a detailed description of the ceremony.

The members of the ghotul are allotted their various parts in the marriage. First of all, the boy's 'parents' go to the girl's 'parents' for the betrothal ceremony, carrying two leaf-pipes to represent bottles of liquor. The girl's parents say—in strict accordance with tradition—'Why have you come, samdhi?' 'O there's nothing special, we were going this way and looked in for a few moments.' 'No, no, there must be some reason.' 'Well, we did hear that a flower had blossomed in your house; we would pick it to adorn our hair.' 'Ah, how truly they say that a dog is fed many years only to be taken by a panther in the end, and a daughter is cherished only to be carried off by the samdhi.' There follows the usual dispute about the bride-price and, when that is agreed, the two parties sit together and smoke.

The following day comes the 'marriage'. Ashes are used instead of haldi. A little booth is made in the ghotul court. The marriage ritual is briefly recapitulated. Water is poured from the roof over the two children. Eager hands catch them and shut them up in an inner room. The bride screams, 'Open the door, let me out'. The others, shouting with laughter, at last let them go. That night the two sleep together, and will probably continue to do so until one of them is married.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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But 'divorce' is allowed. I was given a vivid account by a chelik of the Kapsi ghotul of how this is arranged. If a motiari has intercourse with another boy, her own chelik reports the matter to the Sirdar saying, 'My wife has left her house and made another; for many days she lived and fed with me, but now she has run away and my honour is ruined. How can I live in a broken house, how can my work prosper in a field of weeds?'

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FIG. 58. Ghotul carvings at Nayanar
Slightly enlarged

Then the Sirdar calls the girl and says, 'Well, girl, why have you left your husband? Do you really want to forsake him and live with this other boy?' If the girl has made up her mind, she may answer, 'Yes, I want to live with this boy. My honour has gone to him'. The Sirdar then says to the second boy, 'How can you live with another chelik's wife? Think well, are you going to keep her, or will you send her away again?' The boy replies, 'I didn't fetch the girl; she came to my mat of her own accord. Now how can I quarrel with her or drive her away? Her husband must have neglected her or beaten her'.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

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At this the Sirdar turns to the first boy and says, 'Yes, tell us, you must have abused her and driven her away by your unkindness'. But he replies, 'I never abused her for rice or for work or for lying together. She left by her own desire, straying like a cow. I want her no more. But I must have her price'.

This leads to a long haggle about the compensation to be paid and at last a hundred rupees is settled, and another chelik stands bail. After a few days the second boy brings a hundred siari seeds, and five leaf-pipes representing five bottles of liquor for the panchayat. The money is paid, the pipes are smoked, some ashes are sprinkled over the newly-assorted pair, and the readjustment is complete.

After a few days the deserted boy goes to the Sirdar and says, 'Have you any widows in your pargana, master?' The Sirdar says, 'Well, perhaps—in such and such a village there is a widow, or she may be a virgin, I really forget'. Once again parents are appointed, there is a betrothal and a new marriage. In Kapsi they said that the Tussaro had the task of seeing that the bridegroom fulfilled his duties to his new wife.

I have recorded a curious custom in several ghotul of this type. At Chimri, when the young chelik first gets his 'wife' he has to pay a sort of rent or tribute for her to the ghotul. She is a 'new field' and he must give five score pieces of green wood every year for it. Later, when his girl passes her menarche, the boys say that 'the field is well ploughed and manured'; its value has increased and he must pay ten score. Still later, when the land is fully developed, he must give twenty score. At Mundpal, the rule was that for a young girl, described as a *banghar* field unbroken by the plough, the boy had to give ten score siari seeds. When the girl became mature, she was described as the fruitful ploughed land known as *gabhar*, and the boy had to pay the ghotul fifteen score. Three years after the menarche, a girl was known as a *munda* or embanked field, and now the chelik had to pay twenty score.

And further, if a girl had a great many ornaments, she was described as a rich woman with a large herd of cows and goats, and the chelik had to pay a super-tax of ten score seeds for her. At Rengagondi the boys counted the number of reeds in a girl's sleeping-mat and estimated her importance and the tax to be paid on her accordingly.

Like the 'police work' of the ghotul, this taxation is a sort of game; yet it is taken perfectly seriously, and it impresses on everyone the 'right' that a cheiik has over his ghotul-mate. Many a feast has been enjoyed by the ghotul company out of the public taxes.

Another example of the importance of the 'ghotul marriage' is to be found in the entirely serious creation of a whole set of 'ghotul relatives'. In ordinary life, the Muria (like most of the rest of India) regard certain people as standing in a relationship of taboo. Such are a boy's wife's elder sister (*akoin*), his younger brother's wife (*koryār*), and his father's younger brother's wife (*kuchi*). He must not sit alone in the same room with any of these; he must not touch their heads; in his presence they must not 'lift their legs'—that is, they should not sit or climb over a fence before him and must not walk in front of him.

These rules are observed, at least officially, in the ghotul. Thus a young chelik must not have anything to do with the elder sister of the motiari who is his special partner; an older boy must not sit on his younger brother's sleeping-mat for fear he may be led into an improper familiarity with his '*koryār*'. In Metawand and Markabera there was even a rule that two brothers should not sleep in the same room of the ghotul, for it is essential that the younger brother's 'wife' should avoid the elder brother. She must not be

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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found alone in the ghotul with him. A Muria girl never covers her head,[1] but at least she must not undo her hair in his presence. When the elder brother is away from the ghotul his 'wife' is allowed to sleep with her '*dewar*', the younger brother.

A chelik does not seem to have to avoid entirely his brother's daughters; in the ghotul he may abuse them or flirt with them, but he ought not to sleep with one of them. But they can massage him, as indeed his own sisters can. They call him *māma* in the ghotul. This leads us to the interesting provision that close relations should not address each other by their ghotul titles, but by terms of relationship, thus continually reminding themselves and one another how they are related and that they must behave.

What is the reason for these rules of avoidance? The ban on the younger brother's wife is probably to safeguard the position of the younger brother, always in jeopardy as a hundred folk-tales show. In the ghotul certainly it serves as a valuable protection to a younger boy, whose brother might well be the all-powerful Sirdar or Diwan. Similarly, the rule of avoidance between a boy and his motiari's elder sister, who might be the almost equally powerful Belosa or head of the girls, prevents her from taking advantage of her position to seduce a boy away from his 'lawful wife'.

FIG. 59. Wall-decoration from the Remavand ghotul
Height 6"

There does not appear to be any taboo on brothers and sisters witnessing each other's erotic adventures in the ghotul, provided they do not discuss them with each other and, of course, strictly avoid any relations between themselves. It is not, however, considered improper for a brother to have full knowledge of and to hear all about his sister's love affairs. Once in Binjhli a boy told me in Gondi how he had dreamt that he was having intercourse with a certain girl. The girl's own brother interpreted for me without embarrassment.

A sister sleeps every night with a boy in the presence of her brother. A brother flirts and makes love and sleeps with girls before his sister. They seem to be quite unembarrassed and both behave naturally.

[1] What Hoffmann said so charmingly of the Munda is true also of the Muria girl: 'Nothing but a load or a flower is ever seen on the head of a Munda woman.'

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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In many ghotul a sister may comb and massage a brother, but in Kabonga there was a rule that she must not salute him with Johar nor comb his hair.

Many coarse jokes are made about the relation of brothers and sisters when everyone is drunk at a marriage. There are many obscene songs about it, for it is regarded as a licensed subject for humour. As in other societies, however, it is probable that such humour only exists against a background of very strict propriety. The suggestion that a brother is sleeping with his sister is amusing simply because he never does.

Generally it is said that brothers and sisters live together very happily. When they do quarrel a boy may say to his sister: 'You *potsa* (big-bellied one), you *chipri* (you've got dirty eyes), *saladri* (murderess).' It is said that a girl on her marriage remembers these delightful animosities and weeps bitterly saying, 'No one will be able to quarrel with me so sweetly in future'. The brother may threaten to turn his sister out of the house, but she has the ready retort available that 'in any case I am not going to stay in your house, I can easily make a living somewhere else'.

III

How far is the rule of fidelity to a single partner kept? This is a matter on which there can be no possible statistical evidence; one can only give a general impression and quote a few examples. The temptation to break the rules must be very great. Ghotul routine aims at stimulating the sexual passion. The boys and girls live in the closest contact, and enjoy sexual intimacy in one another's presence. Certain relatives, such as the younger brother, have traditional privileges. The chelik are often absent in the fields, and their motiari sleep accessible and alone. In every 'memoir' that I have collected, the narrator has described how he or she evaded the ghotul rules.

From these memoirs I will give a few quotations. My first is from the experiences of Budhu, a Poyami of Kanera in the Sonawal Pargana of Kondagaon, in a *jodidār* ghotul forty years ago.

> In those days there were about twelve boys and ten girls in the ghotul, and a boy used to sleep with his partner until his marriage unless he changed his name. I was married to the Malko and loved her very much. I was then Sepahi. But after two years, I was made Kotwar, and I had to leave Malko and sleep with the Kotwarin, for that was the rule. Yet my thoughts were always for Malko, and at night when everyone was asleep I would leave the mat where I was sleeping with Kotwarin and creep over to Malko to make love to her.
>
> My parents knew nothing of this, yet to my delight they told me one day that they were going to arrange my marriage with Malko, which was just what we wanted.
>
> A few days after this good news, I went to Sonawal for work and stayed there for a week. During this time I slept in the Sonawal ghotul with the Jamadarin. On the last night this girl took the comb from my hair as a keepsake. From Sonawal I went to Kokori and danced in the ghotul there. One of the motiari fell in love with me and constantly offered me tobacco. After a few days I started home, but three of the girls met me in the jungle and begged me to stay with them, but I had to go home.
>
> Soon afterwards I was married to Malko and we were very happy. We have always done everything together and have never quarrelled.

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TWO TYPES OF GHOTUL

A year after my marriage, the Maharaja came to Bara Dongar and I went with my father-to see him enthroned. Afterwards we went to Malakot, and I slept in the ghotul for two nights. While all were asleep one of the girls came secretly to me.

Here we have a picture of a situation where a boy who is a member of a *jodidār* ghotul and thus supposed to be faithful to his official partner, yet continues his romantic attachment to the girl he really loves and whom he ultimately marries. Budhu was also able to evade the rules by visiting ghotul of the other type. Had the Sonawal and Kokori ghotul also been of the *jodidār* pattern, they could not have extended to him such privileges.

It will be noted that these temporary encounters with other girls did not in any way interfere with the boy's devotion to his Malko and the happiness of his married life with her. He says, and I have no doubt that it is true, that he has never had an affair with a married woman, or indeed with any other woman after the early incident in the Malakot ghotul. 'After a year my wife stopped me going to the ghotul.'

Here is another significant record of life in a *jodidār* ghotul at the time of the Bastar rebellion (1911). The narrator is Gadru, a Muria of the Kunjami clan from Chaniyagaon.

After I had been in the ghotul a year I was given the name of Silledar at the time of the Chait Dandar, and six months later I was paired off with the Jhalaro and began to sleep with her. The Mukhiya warned us both not to have too frequent intercourse and to take every care that there was no scandal [i.e. pregnancy]. I slept with the Jhalaro daily, but I only went to her twice a week or even less. The girl who really loved me in the ghotul was the Alosa, my mother's brother's daughter. Her partner was the Jhoria and she had to sleep with him every night. But when he was asleep, she often used to crawl over to my mat and I would turn my back on the Jhalaro and make love to her.

An old woman of about seventy years of age, Koili of Berma village, gave some interesting reminiscences of her ghotul life.

For six months after I joined the ghotul, until I got a title, I slept with the little boys. When I was made Nirosa I was too poor to give the usual feast of parched rice and liquor, but the chelik collected money for me and got a rupee's worth of liquor so I was not shamed. That night everyone was very drunk, and the Kotwar who slept with me had intercourse with me for the first time. The next day the Kotwar ordered that henceforth I was to sleep every day with the Sirdar. The Sirdar was related to me, though distantly, as a parental uncle, and I did not like it at all, but I had to do what the Kotwar said. We were both very shy and never spoke to one another and slept back to back with faces turned away. It was a long time before we had intercourse, but when there was a marriage in the village, everyone got drunk and excited and that night we went to each other. After that our shyness disappeared, and we used to have congress every night.

Soon afterwards my betrothal ceremony took place. Among those who came for it was the Kapatdar of the Veleknar ghotul. The Sirdar had gone away somewhere, and that night the Kapatdar slept with me. When the others knew of it, they laughed at us and teased us; I was so embarrassed that for a whole week I stayed away from the ghotul.

When I was married, the motiari brought me to the ghotul compound

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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and gave me liquor to drink. I made Johar to all the chelik and motiari and never entered the ghotul again.

Three years after marriage I gave birth to a male child, but with great difficulty, for the Sirdar who loved me very much after all the years we were together in the ghotul and who had wanted me to run away with him, was angry at my marrying someone else and sent magic to trouble me. When I recovered, the Sirdar made my husband ill instead, but the Siraha cured him.

Another old woman over sixty years old, Kachari of Kanhargaon, remembers the ghotul of that village while it was still *jodidār*; a few years later the rules were changed on account of a scandal.

My ghotul husband was the Likhen; I was the Chaiko. But the boy I really loved was the Salya. One day while I was going to the ghotul, I met the Salya and went with him to a field. The Sirisdar and Beldar saw us and reported the matter to the Kotwar. That night the chelik refused to let me enter the ghotul, and the Kotwar and some others questioned me outside the door, accusing me of having had intercourse with the Salya in the field.

The Diwan said that as a punishment every chelik would have me that night, but just then a constable came to the Paik-gudi and the Diwan had to go and fetch him wood, so I escaped. But the Kotwar tried to have intercourse with me during the night. I resisted him, and in the morning he was very angry and told the Diwan what had happened. The next evening five of the chelik had me one after another, and in spite of all my cries and struggles I could not get free. The other motiari watched, but did nothing to help me.[1]

When I was sixteen years old I was betrothed to a chelik at Bara Dongar, but I eloped with the Salya. We were about to get married at Bandopal, when a search party caught us, and I was taken home and immediately married to my betrothed. Later I left him for a very handsome chelik from my old ghotul whom I met in the bazaar. Four years later I went mad as a result of the magic of my first husband, but the Siraha cured me.

IV

Yet in spite of such occasional breaches of the rules, the *jodidār* ghotul remains a school of marital fidelity. Severe penalties attach to the discovery of the cloth of a girl other than your own on a mat or to the taking advantage

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[1] Roy describes a similar act of corporate violation as a punishment inflicted on a girl in the Oraon *dhumkuria*. 'Should a girl refuse to come when sent for, a number of young boys are dispatched to bring her by force. When she is brought, should she refuse to elect a mate, a number of older boys violate her one after the other, until she names the boy she would have for her mate.'—S. C. Roy, *The Oraons*, p. 246. Sir E. A. Gait wrote: 'I have been told that if an Oraon girl is thought unduly coy all the youths of the village combine against her and get her deflowered by one or more of their number.'—J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy*, Vol. II, p. 287n. In the Kondabera ghotul, there was once a 'strike' and the girls, so the chelik told me, 'decided not to let us have them. We all decided to take them by force one night, and so we did'. But I doubt if this often happens either in Bastar or Chota Nagpur. I have, however, found parallel incidents among the Gond and Pardhan of Mandla. It is perhaps worth noting that if a Bororo Indian suspected his wife of infidelity, he put her at the disposal of the young men in the *bakito*-dormitory.—V. Fric and P. Radin, 'Contributions to the Study of the Bororo Indians', *JAI*, Vol. XXXVI (1906), p. 290.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

of a chelik's absence from the ghotul to seduce his motiari. These things happen, but they are condemned. 883X

The chelik themselves consider that this type of ghotul has several great advantages. The first, characteristically, is the very practical one that if a girl becomes pregnant 'they know the thief'. Elsewhere it is naturally often difficult to fix the responsibility of fatherhood. Again, the chelik say that a great deal of trouble is saved. 'We know what to do; there is no jealousy or dispute; everything is settled, and there is no more to be said.' I think it is true that there is less strain and anxiety in these ghotul; and there is room for the development of deep intimacy and romantic attachment. In the pre-nuptial period, however, it may be argued that these things are not altogether desirable. 836

They certainly lead to greater conflict with the parents over marriage. Many chelik and motiari look forward with misery to separation from the partner who has shared with them the happy days of youth, and occasionally—but only occasionally—ghotul partners elope together rather than face a separation. Statistics here are striking. Out of the 2000 marriages examined, 1884 were celebrated according to the wishes of the parents and the great majority of cases were of the cross-cousin type. Of the 116 irregular marriages, 77 were those of chelik who married their 'ghotul-wives'. Only 39 irregular marriages were reported from the other type of ghotul. In view of the smaller number of men from the *jodidār* ghotul, these figures indicate a proportion of about 1 in every 9 of chelik in this type of ghotul who had conflict with their parents, and only 1 in about 32 from the other type of ghotul. 883X 936 583

Of those who married their 'ghotul-wives', 9 out of 77 divorced them later, giving a proportion of 11·6 per cent against a proportion of 2·9 per cent of divorces for the whole 2000 marriages. It is interesting that the proportion of divorces among Lamhada—the other type of chelik who live in close contact with their future wives before marriage—is almost exactly the same, 11·5 per cent. And although 77 and 113 cases respectively are not sufficient for us to draw far-reaching conclusions, it is undoubtedly striking that there should be so high an incidence of divorce among these and only among these two classes of people. 883X 836 586

Yet even though a passionate ghotul attachment is not the best preparation for a life-long union, at the time separation seems tragic indeed. A girl especially, whose chelik marries someone else, is a pathetic figure. 'Her life has left her'—so they put it in Munjmeta—'she lies alone on her mat and pines for him; she has no heart to take another lover.' Often she sleeps with a girl friend who is herself in the arms of a boy, but she lies with her back to them, turning away from all that happiness. In Ulera they said that when a girl's lover leaves her, she cannot sing for many days. When the Mukhwan of Banjora died, the Mukhwanin's face was 'destroyed by sorrow'. 883X 836- 152

Boys are often, but not always, more philosophical. 'Yes, for a month you feel wretched', said a chelik in Markabera. 'Then you forget all about it. One may be able to meet her again, but that is difficult and dangerous. But at least you can always get another girl in the ghotul.' Yet at Bopna the Silledar was called a 'widower', so miserable was he after his 'wife's' marriage last year. At Markabera, Dasru took to drink after his ghotul wife was married and Gurti, who was deeply attached to the beautiful and vivacious Malko, looked very lonely and miserable when I saw him nearly a year after her marriage to a boy in another village.

It is remarkable, however, how few actual tragedies there have been from this cause. In the last ten years, only one case of suicide has been registered 883X 836 762

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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as due to the separation of a chelik from his motiari. This occurred in 1932 and was, as we should expect, in a *jodidār* ghotul, at Amgaon in the Karangal Pargana. Chaitu and Munga—I do not know their ghotul titles—the boy about twenty years old and the girl about eighteen—were greatly attached to each other and dreaded the thought of separation. They each begged their parents to let them marry, but Munga's father was adamant and married her to Dasru of the Markabera ghotul, a different Dasru, of course, from the one

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Fig. 60. Carving in the ghotul at Nayanar
Height 44"

I have just mentioned. After the marriage she was taken to Markabera, where the chelik diverted themselves as usual by shutting her up with the new husband whom she did not love. Before she left Amgaon, she was taken round the village to say good-bye and every household made their contributions for the ghotul feast that would be held a week after the marriage.

When the time came, chelik and motiari went singing through the pretty wooded country that separates Amgaon from Markabera and invited Munga to the feast. Her husband could not refuse, though he must have known there was danger in Amgaon, but it was so near—only two miles away—that he let her go. When she reached her old home, she went to meet Chaitu in the lonely corner of a field; he had brought some liquor for her, and they sat down to have a farewell drink together. But a little girl, Chaitu's younger sister, followed them and ran to tell her father. He hurried to the spot, caught the two lovers

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together, and beat the boy, telling him that the girl was no longer his, and that such meetings would bring scandal upon them all. Behind those slaps how much one can see of parental exasperation over a long and troublesome intrigue, almost certainly parental envy of a son entranced by love, and the usual Muria dread of adultery—a very genuine sentiment.

Boy and girl ran away—I can see their quick Muria nature dissolved in tears and anger—and returned to the ghotul for the feast that sealed their separation. Munga had to massage every chelik after supper as a farewell rite, but then, when all was quiet, they crept together out of the ghotul to the woods. That night—it was 20 May 1932—they climbed onto the great branch of a mango tree, tied and adjusted ropes, and facing one another fell to death. When they were found, Chaitu had his hand upon his motiari's shoulder.

V

Although outwardly both types of ghotul are the same and often only the most careful investigation can distinguish them, the customs and atmosphere of the modern type are entirely distinct. Here everything is arranged to prevent long-drawn intense attachments, to eliminate jealousy and possessiveness, to deepen the sense of communal property and action. No chelik may regard a motiari as 'his'. There is no ghotul marriage, there are no ghotul partners. 'Everyone belongs to everyone else' in the very spirit of *Brave New World*. A chelik and motiari may sleep together for three nights; after that they are warned; if they persist they are punished. If a boy shows any signs of possessiveness for a particular girl, if his face falls when he sees her making love to someone else, if he gets annoyed at her sleeping with another chelik, should he be offended if she refuses to massage him and goes to someone else, he is forcibly reminded by his fellows that she is not his wife, he has no *hag* or right over her, she is the *mál* or property of the whole ghotul, and if he looks like that he will be punished.

This type of ghotul is sometimes called the *mundi-badalna* because in it you change from girl to girl just as you change your rings from finger to finger.

How is it that this type of ghotul has so widely displaced the classical *jodidér* dormitory? Why is the process of change from one type to the other continuing today? There are many reasons.

In the Benur Pargana and at Koilibera I heard the phrase 'so that they will not be ruined by love'. This is certainly a genuine consideration. Too much love before marriage will mean too little after it. Sexual romance is not the best preparation for a life-long union. A strong and lasting attachment to a girl in the pre-nuptial period may lead to an elopement and an irregular marriage. Such a marriage disturbs the serenity of the home—which ultimately depends on the parents; it destroys the old alliances of families and prevents the repayment of ancient debts; it often turns out unsuccessful. In villages where several such elopements have occurred within a short time, the rules of the ghotul have been changed.

The modern rules are also intended as a contraceptive measure. The Muria believe that conception only occurs when the male and female remain together for a long period and enjoy an uninterrupted series of acts of coition with no divergence of interest. Both psychological and physical concentration in fidelity to a single partner is required for pregnancy.

A former Chalan of Golawand, for example, described how he consistently changed his ghotul partners and never made anyone pregnant; but two friends of his in the same ghotul slept every day with the same girls and impregnated

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them both. The Gaita at Koilibera said that a chelik could have congress three times a night and it would do no harm, but if he went to the same girl more than three days running he would fall ill and she might conceive.

The modern type of ghotul breaks up the coital sequence and is thus supposed to lessen the danger of conception. Statistics, however, show that this is not so. Among 2000 men, 80 made motiari pregnant during their ghotul period; of these 25 or 1 in 28·8 belonged to *jodidār* ghotul, and 55 or 1 in 23·2 to the modern type.

FIG. 61. Carving on the door of a private house at Bandopal
Slightly enlarged

A more genuine reason for the prevalence of the newer rules is the Muria temperament which is fundamentally hostile to individualism, to exclusiveness, and to any kind of 'possessiveness'. The Muria believe that if everyone belongs to everyone else in the ghotul there will be no room for jealousy. I am not at the moment thinking whether this is true or not, but it is certainly what

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they think. 'If we get jealous of each other', they said at Nayanar, 'we exchange lovers.' At Esalnar a chelik said, 'We change partners because we want everyone to be happy; if one boy and one girl are always together as if they were man and wife, then some would be happier than others; the best boys and the best girls would be the property of individuals instead of being the property of the ghotul, and the rest would be miserable'. When someone told the chelik at Kabonga that they were behaving like a lot of goats, they indignantly explained that 'if a girl always sleeps with one boy, we feel that the unity of our life is being destroyed; in a ghotul all the girls should be the wives of all the boys'. In Bhanpuri they used a similar phrase that 'all the girls are the wives of the Kotwar', meaning that since the Kotwar is in charge of them and has the task of distributing them among the chelik, they must all be regarded as his wives in his capacity as a representative of the ghotul.

The result of this arrangement is—according to Muria theory—that everybody in the ghotul is in love with everybody else. 'Boys and girls in a ghotul love each other as brothers love sisters, as parents love children, as husbands love their wives.' It is remarkable that this general diffused love and affection among chelik and motiari should lead them to identify parental, family and romantic love.

In Masora the boys gave as a reason for changing their partners the very human liking for change, 'love's sweetest part, variety'. One of them said, 'You don't want to eat the same vegetable every day'. The change of object undoubtedly stimulates the sexual instinct and makes ghotul life more exciting. But since the whole tendency of Muria society is towards stability, I doubt if the desire for variety has played a very important part in the development of the ghotul rules.[1]

Another reason for the change of rules, given this time by the chelik of Sidhawand, was that if a chelik was always going about with the same motiari, the elders of the village would notice it and suspect that they had sexual relations. Yet at Chandabera, where there is a *jodidār* ghotul, the Muria claimed that the boys and girls behaved with so much discretion that no one could ever guess how they were paired off. Here we come up against the strange convention that the elders of the village have no idea of what goes on in the ghotul, where they all spent their own childhood, but suppose it to be, as they said again at Sidhawand (where some had been to school), 'a sort of Boy Scouts Club, whose members meet together for social service and for nothing else'.

The extent of this convention should not be exaggerated. The elders are often equally prepared to make the most indecent comments on the sexual activities of the younger generation. But in the presence of outsiders at least, there is a general tendency to make a show of the decorum of village life.

Of this type of ghotul, Evelyn Wood has asked how its ideal can be achieved 'without a sense of universal futility and frustration caused by such lavish dissipation of libidal power'. The answer to this is, I think, that we must

[1] The ghotul evidence hardly supports Bloch, who has based his belief in an original state of promiscuity largely on the human desire for change. 'It is perfectly clear', he says, 'that the human need for sexual variety, which is an established anthropological phenomenon, must in primitive times have been much stronger and more unbridled. Since even in our time, in a state of the most advanced civilization, this natural need for variety continues to manifest itself in almost undiminished strength, we can hardly regard it as necessary to prove that in primitive conditions sexual promiscuity was a more original, and, indeed, a more natural state than marriage.'—I. Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (London, 1908), p. 192. But the history of the ghotul shows that it is the desire for permanence that is original; it is only the modern type of dormitory that attempts 'to do justice to the human need for sexual variety'.

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not overestimate the extent of ghotul promiscuity. There is no kind of orgy or licence; everything is strictly regulated and conducted with the utmost decorum. The average ghotul is small, with not more than twenty members. Of these twenty, several are bound to be closely related or of the same clan. In Palli, for example, which is a large ghotul, only three clans were represented, in Kajen only two. Moreover these boys and girls have grown up together from babyhood. When, therefore, we read that a chelik has to sleep with a new girl every three days, we are not to think of him as being able to pick and choose from an endless procession of new and exciting girls. He is going to spend his time in rotation among a little group of girls every one of whom he knows very well indeed. There is no doubt a certain dissipation of libidal energy, but I do not think that, except perhaps in the very large ghotul, it is excessive.

And further, a boy is not generally able to choose his partner at will. It is the Kotwar, in consultation with the Belosa, who decides how the chelik and motiari are to couple and when they are to change their partners. For example, at Kabonga the Kotwar himself told me, 'I am the Raja of the motiari and every two or three days I rearrange them and tell the Belosa who is to sleep with whom'. In Dongrigura, the Kotwar himself had the privilege of a permanent partner, and he and his 'wife' made arrangements for the rest. There was the same custom in the neighbouring Palari. In Binjhli, it was the leading girls who made these arrangements.[1]

The rules differ from place to place. At Bakulwahi, where the girls slept in the ghotul only on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and where there were in 1941 more chelik than motiari, the following procedure was adopted. Suppose there were thirty chelik and ten motiari, then on Sunday the motiari would comb the hair of all the chelik, but they would leave their combs in the hair of only ten as a sign that on that night those boys would have partners on their sleeping-mats. On Wednesday the girls would leave their combs in the hair of another ten; so also on Thursday. In this way every chelik was able to sleep with one of the motiari once a week. Should a girl not distribute her affections equally, she was punished, and should she leave her comb in the hair of the same boy two nights running she was heavily fined.

The typical Muria emphasis on equality is shown by an explanation given by the chelik of this ghotul when I raised the point that it was surely unusual that the number of girls could be divided so conveniently into the number of boys. If that were impossible, they pointed out, if for example there were twelve girls to the thirty boys, then twelve boys would sleep with twelve girls on Sunday and another twelve boys with the twelve girls on Wednesday. By Thursday only six boys would remain unpartnered for that week. On that night only six girls would leave their combs in the hair of these boys, and the other six girls and the other twenty-four boys would sleep alone. Any other arrangement would destroy the unity of the ghotul.

[1] With this we may compare the very interesting arrangements of the Masai *manyatta*-dormitory. When the warriors feel like it, which is 'very, very often', they go in a group to stand outside the village and call to the girls. These approach and the warriors then say 'Tasiuliu!' whereupon each girl selects one of the men; by her choice she binds herself to sleep with him that night. 'It is a point of honour and etiquette that no girl so called upon to choose a man may refuse to do so, but she may make her choice from any of those men who were in the group that called to her.' The Masai also have a system of selecting permanent lovers, though these can still sleep with other partners—but the permanent lovers can sleep together without formality whenever they desire.—L. S. B. Leakey, 'Some Notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony', *JRAI*, Vol. LX, pp. 192ff.

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At Esalnar there is a different arrangement. Here a motiari sleeps with a chelik for two months and during this period she takes as her title the feminine form of his name. Thus a girl who is temporarily sleeping with the Tahsildar is temporarily Tahsildarin. When she changes her partner and goes to sleep with the Kotwar, then for two months she is called Kotwarin. This arrangement is formally announced in the ghotul, and the girl and boy exchange rings which they return to each other when their period of partnership is ended.

'Does not this arrangement', I asked, 'destroy one of the chief reasons for changing partners, namely, that conception is less likely when a boy and girl do not sleep together for too long a period?' In order to avoid this danger, the boys explained, the rule at Esalnar is that no one may have intercourse without special permission from the council of elder boys. During the two months, they said, this permission was only given about once a week. When the bigger boys decide on it they tell the Kotwar. He goes to the girls and says, 'Today, girls, you may eat tobacco and lime'. Then he says to each in turn, 'Are you going to eat your tobacco or not?' and each is expected to say 'Yes'. If a girl says 'No', he replies, 'Then why did you come to the ghotul? If you behave like this, we will turn you out'.

The following morning the Tahsildar and Kotwar sit by the door and ask each girl in turn as she goes out, 'Did you eat your tobacco last night or no?' If the girl says 'Yes' she is allowed to go, but if anyone says 'No' then her chelik is fined a pice for loss of prestige.

A remarkable thing about these arrangements is that they interfere with the normal course of sexual selection. The beautiful girl and the ugly or even deformed girl has exactly the same sexual opportunity, exactly the same sexual privilege. So with the boys. In Bhanpuri the Daroga was blind; in Chandabera the Kotwar was a cripple; elsewhere I have seen boys with hare-lips, deeply pitted with small-pox, repulsive with yaws, but every one of them officially had the same privileges as the most handsome and adorable chelik. The Chandabera Kotwar, indeed, was 'married' (for it was that kind of ghotul) to the prettiest girl in the whole company. A girl must be prepared to go to any member of the ghotul fellowship. For example, in Sirpuri, the rather mediocre Sirdar was very much in love with a beautiful girl, the Malko, who treated him with disdain. When he tried to talk to her, she abused him and drove him away. Although she was more than once told to sleep with him, she managed to arrange to exchange him for another boy. After this had happened for a little while, the Sirdar reported the matter to the Diwan who said, 'Try for a few days more and let's see what happens'. When she still refused, the Diwan called for the Kotwar and told him to adjust the matter. The Kotwar went to the Malko and said, 'What did you come to the ghotul for? Did you come for your own pleasure or for ours? Did you come to play with us or to sulk? If you want to sulk you had better sleep at home.'

Still the Malko refused to have anything to do with the Sirdar and at last the boys expelled her from the ghotul. We must remember that she was a beautiful girl and was giving her affection freely to the very boys who expelled her, but she was breaking the integrity and fellowship of the ghotul, so she had to go. After a little while, however, she gave in. She paid a fine of two annas' worth of liquor, was readmitted and that night slept with the Sirdar.

I recorded a similar incident in Kabonga, where the Belosa disliked the Kotwar and preferred to be expelled from the ghotul rather than sleep with him, but in the end she too gave in.

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It is equally offensive to the ghotul spirit for a chelik and motiari to fall openly in love and to insist on sleeping together to the exclusion of the rest. When they do this the others get jealous and irritated. If a girl, who has thus given way to her feelings, then goes to comb the hair of another boy, he says, 'Don't touch my head, go and do your lover's; I am not a boy, you never take any notice of me'. None of the chelik will let her massage them. If this treatment is not successful they catch the offenders by the hand and drag them out of the ghotul saying, 'Come no more to our ghotul, sleep in your own houses, have a lonely marriage without us, for we won't come to it'. In Kabonga, where such an incident occurred in 1941, the Kotwar said that after they had expelled the boy and girl, the boy very quickly repented, paid a fine of liquor and was readmitted. The girl was more obstinate. After a time the Kotwar went to her house and said that if she would sleep with each of the three leading boys on three successive nights, he would let her return. In the end she agreed to this and was accepted back into the ghotul. A similar incident occurred at Sirni where a girl insisted on trying to sleep always with the same boy. The others said, 'Is there only one chelik? Aren't we chelik too?' and at last turned them both out. They were only readmitted when they gave a rupee's worth of liquor to the company.

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FIG. 62. Carving on a pillar in the ghotul at Almer

In a number of ghotul this system of complete equality has broken down and the three leading boys, the Sirdar or Diwan and his counsellors, including probably the Kotwar, have the right either to have a permanent partner just as in the older type of ghotul, or to choose their own partner whenever a change is made, without reference to the Kotwar. When this is done, and it happens generally in the bigger ghotul where there may be as many as sixty or seventy members, the leaders still insist on the rule of

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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change being rigorously observed by all the others. Sometimes the three leading boys allot to themselves the three leading girls and exchange them between themselves, but do not allow them to go to the others. This is recognised as hostile to genuine ghotul tradition, for it does indeed offend against the ideal of equality.

In Banjora, the Kotwar, who there is the head of the ghotul, must always sleep with the Belosa or leader of the girls. The other chelik and motiari must change their partners every three days. The rule is that the Kotwar's mate must be the head of the girls and be called Belosa. Supposing the Kotwar gets married, then the new Kotwar must take the Belosa as his partner, but if both are of the same clan or closely related then the new Kotwar gets a new girl as his permanent partner and she calls herself Belosa while the old Belosa changes her name and loses her position. In this way Kotwar and Belosa always sleep together and rule the ghotul.

Another way in which the rules are broken is by simple evasion. In his memoirs, Bindo, who was head of the Benur ghotul sixty years ago, describes how he formed an attachment for the Malko.

> For a whole year we slept together. But the rule was that Malko could not sleep daily with the same boy. So what did we do? I used to sleep alone in a corner, and she would lie down with some other boy. When all were asleep she would get up and come to me. There was another beautiful girl in our ghotul, the Dulosa, who also loved me. She often came to me. So I used to sleep with Malko some nights and with Dulosa other nights. The chelik and motiari knew about it, but they were afraid to say anything as I was their leader.

In Binjhli also, I was told that lovers would arrange to meet earlier in the evening before going to the ghotul. The experiences of Konda, the secular headman of Kanhargaon, are worth recording.

> Formerly in the Kanhargaon ghotul, it was the custom to exchange partners. Before I was made Joliya, little girls used to sleep with me, afterwards I slept with the big girls. The Jhalaro, who was related to me as a distant cousin, loved me, so did the Piosa, who was in a joking relationship with me. The Piosa used to sleep with me every night, but secretly, and when she had no partner the Jhalaro also crept stealthily to my mat when all the others were asleep. These two girls used to make necklaces for me and in return I made them combs, and often gave them a few pice when they went to the bazaar. If at any time I was absent from the ghotul, the Jhalaro and Piosa would come to my house and by some means or other would drag me there. When the Sirdar discovered that the Jhalaro was sleeping with me, he fined her two annas' worth of liquor and I was warned that if I let her sleep with me again I would be fined a rupee and would be responsible to the elders of the village if anything happened. Unfortunately, the Jhalaro became pregnant, and when I learnt that the fact was known to everyone I got frightened and ran away to Malakot. In my absence Jhalaro's parents hurriedly had her married to her betrothed. I then returned to Kanhargaon and the next day went with the other ghotul boys to Phunder to dance the Pus Kolang. On our way home we were all drunk and the other boys quarrelled with me. They accused me of disgracing the ghotul's name and would not let me return with them. But I offered them eight annas for liquor and we became friends.

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One day when I met the Piosa in the Dhanora bazaar I gave her some gur and parched rice and we planned to elope to another village. But when the Piosa returned home she fell ill, and after a few days she died.

VI

It will be convenient to consider here some other deviations from the classic ghotul model. In a number of villages, although the girls attend the ghotul every evening for singing, dancing and games, and even comb the chelik's hair and massage their limbs, they do not sleep in the dormitory, but go away late at night either to a house of their own or to the verandah of some old widow's house.

In such ghotul there is generally a rule that the girls may sleep in the dormitory once or twice a week and at festivals and marriages. An absolute ban on cohabitation is unusual. For example, in Binjhli, where the ghotul life is highly developed, there is massage once a week on Fridays and that night the chelik and motiari sleep together. On other nights the girls go home to any convenient house. But they stay in the ghotul for a very long time, and the boys say that they often have intercourse with them before they go away. The girls also told my wife the same. In the neighbouring village of Palki, there is a similar custom, but here there are two ghotul in one compound. Girls and boys sleep separately all the week except on the bazaar day, Wednesday. In both ghotul this rule of separation is relaxed on festivals, before marriages and when girls or boys return from dancing expeditions. In the Kalpatti Pargana and in Kanker State, the motiari generally go home about midnight after games and massage (though they often lie down for a time with the boys before they go), but at festivals and for eight days before a marriage chelik and motiari sleep together. In Tarbaili, in the Paralkot area, the boys said that they saw the girls home after dancing and had intercourse with them on the way. In Palli, near Kondagaon, where the girls and boys sleep in different rooms of someone's house, they meet every fifth day for massage and to sleep together. In the Nayanar ghotul, they said that they slept together for one week in every month, but for the other three weeks the girls went home in the evening. I doubt, however, if this was true—of Nayanar.

The reason for this arrangement, which is generally a temporary one, is almost always some scandal that has agitated the elders of the village. In Karagaon it is said that two boys combined to make a girl pregnant. They had to pay five rupees fine between them and the girl was married at once to her Lamhada. The motiari found that they had got a good deal of discredit out of this incident and after a time went to the village headman and said that it was not their fault, for the boys forced them to have intercourse. So the elders ordered that the boys and girls were only to sleep together every third day: for two days they must be separate; on the third day they could come together, but even then they must change their partners every time. In Kerawahi four or five years ago the ghotul Kotwar eloped with the Suliyaro. Since then the girls have only been allowed to sleep in the ghotul one day a week. Similar stories come from Bokrabera, Kokori, where two years ago three or four girls became pregnant, and Bakulwahi.

The aim of this rule is not so much to punish the boys and girls or to educate them in self-restraint as to avert conception, and is based on the Muria belief that pregnancy only occurs as a result of regular cohabitation night after night over a long period. By breaking up the acts of intercourse and lessening their frequency the chances of conception are supposed to be diminished.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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In a certain number of ghotul, particularly those all round the boundary of the Muria area, where the villagers have come under strong Chhattisgarhi and Oriya or Jagdalpur influence, the girls probably never sleep in the ghotul, but this is the sort of thing about which it is impossible to be sure. In some Hindu villages also, where there is only a small Muria population, the motiari return home regularly in order to avoid the ridicule of their Hindu neighbours. This is particularly true of the north and east of the Kondagaon Tahsil.

In some villages the ghotul has been abandoned altogether. The reasons for this vary. In the south-east of Kondagaon, where many of the Muria in villages approaching the borders of Jagdalpur Tahsil are becoming Bhattra, they naturally have given up the ghotul as an institution. In Kanera, for example, where the Bhattra movement is strong, there is no ghotul building though the boys sleep together in somebody's house and the girls still come to dance and to massage them. In the Amrati and Makri Parganas a number of villages have gone Bhattra with a consequent closing of the ghotul.

Then throughout the Mardapal Pargana, except in one or two villages, Esalnar for example, there have been no ghotul within living memory. This is more curious because the Mardapal Pargana is closely linked to the Chota Dongar and other Jhoria Parganas. The boys and girls dress and dance in Jhoria fashion; they have the same games; they go to the same festivals as the chelik and motiari of the villages to the north and west of them, but they do not have the ghotul system.

Sometimes magic or the fear of it is the cause of a dormitory being abandoned. There is no ghotul in Barbatta, for at one time many of the chelik and motiari died of an epidemic. It is said, however, that they still sleep together in a private house in the village. In Barkai a jealous Kalarin witch made black magic against the ghotul and many of the boys and girls were taken ill. They made the necessary sacrifices and all was well for two months. They fell ill again and this time they built a new ghotul, but there was still trouble. So now the dormitory is closed altogether. At Lihagaon continued epidemics, which naturally spread quickly in the confined conditions of the dormitory, combined with several scandals, resulted in the abandonment of any special building, though the chelik and motiari continue much of their life without it. At Morohnar, the Malik made his motiari pregnant and went to live in Kanera. At Kanera he eloped with another girl and married her. 'This angered the gods, and the chelik and motiari of Morohnar fell ill.' The ghotul was shut for two months, re-opened, the members fell ill again, and it was finally closed.

Sometimes outside interference is the cause. At Dahikonga, the Hindu landlord forced the Muria to destroy their ghotul. At Selnar, where there is a primary school, the teachers have succeeded in driving the ghotul life underground and all that clean, healthy, happy existence has yielded to furtive meetings on verandahs and in the fields. In Pendrawand, the ghotul was closed under the influence of outsiders from across the border, but the boys and girls use a dilapidated Thana-gudi when it is unoccupied.[1]

[1] Somewhat similar causes have led to the abandonment of the *dhumkuria* dormitories in several Uraon villages. In Kumbhar Tola, a Hinduized Uraon village only four miles from Ranchi, there was no *dhumkuria*. In a village near the Jashpur border, where there was a large Church, and in another village near Lohadaga, the people professed that they had not even heard the word *dhumkuria* and an elderly Uraon became quite offensive at the suggestion that there was such a thing in his village. At Agru I saw the ruined building of a dormitory which had been abandoned, because they could not afford, so they said, to replace the roof. But since at Agru there was a fine dancing-floor, there was probably some other reason—a mysterious death, or a scandal—which accounted for the *dhumkuria's* collapse. Roy says that 'in one village we were told that long ago a

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The pubic hairs, reference to which can be made the most inflammatory of insults, are entirely removed by girls. They are supposed to smear the hairs with wood-ash and pull them out. 'If a woman uses a razor for this', we were told at Phauda, 'she will become very heavy after death, and the men who carry out her body will laugh and say, "She's one of those who used a razor".'[1]

III. Combs

Belle marrāte pungār puy ānta

On a dry tree blossoms a flower—A comb

In the intimate life of chelik and motiari the comb plays a most important part. It is used every night by the motiari when they tidy the hair of the boys. It is used to titillate the skin of back and arms. In many places it is one of the most popular forms of personal adornment. Both boys and girls wear it but it is essentially a girl's possession and a girl's decoration. In Binjhli I remember seeing a row of girls walking in file; each of them had ten or fifteen combs arranged in lines on the left side of the head. But there is no rule about this. Sometimes the combs are in the back hair, sometimes on both sides. Boys wear one or two combs in the turban, or stuck in the back hair.

Different types of comb are illustrated in Figs. 67-70, 74-5, and 80-1. I believe the patterns are simply for decorative purposes and have no magical significance. Thurston has an interesting passage, which unfortunately he does not illustrate, about the strikingly similar designs of the combs of the Negritos of Malacca and the Kadir of the Anaimalai Hills.[2] Preuss had worked out a theory that the patterns were not geometrical, but consisted of a series of hieroglyphics.[3] Thurston, however, believed that the Kadir comb decorations were only conventional. The bamboo combs worn by Semang women are said to be talismans against disease,[4] but neither Kadir nor Muria combs seem to have this meaning. The Muria combs are often carved with phallic symbols—but their aim is not magical, but the very practical one of arousing sexual interest.[5]

For a girl to possess a large number of combs does not necessarily mean that she is specially popular; more probably it implies that she has a very

[1] With this may be compared a Gond proverbial saying recorded in Mandla. 'The bearers lifted up the pubic hairs to make the corpse lighter, but found it made no difference.'

[2] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 27f.

[3] K. T. Preuss, 'Die Zauberbilder Schriften der Negrito in Malaya' in *Globus*, 1899. Schebesta, however, considers that this, like the flower-pattern theory of Vaughan Stevens, is 'entirely baseless'. P. Schebesta, 'The Decorative Art of the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula', *JRAS* (1929), p. 749. (See Fig. 76)

[4] W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), Vol. I, pp. 396ff. For the magical significance of the comb, see also J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales* (London, 1890), Vol. I, p. lxxi; L. Garnett, *Greek Folk Poesy* (London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 437. The occurrence of the comb on early Celtic monuments points to the value set on it. See Macculloch, op. cit., p. 180.

[5] In several tribes, the gift of a comb is an essential part of the marriage ceremony. This is so among the Muduvar.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 93. The Kadir bridegroom should always make a comb and present it to his future wife just before marriage or at the end of the ceremony.—Ibid., Vol. III, p. 28. At a Kuki marriage, the priest presents husband and wife with small combs. 'Combs, perhaps these particular combs, are very sacred things. It is very unlucky to lose them, and man and wife only may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is buried with him, and his near relations break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them.'—Dalton, op. cit., p. 47.

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FIG. 87. Head-band of sago palm fibre from Malakot (*see p. 385*)
Length 23"

FIG. 88. Neck-band of date palm fibre from Bayanar (*see p. 385*)
Length 16"

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devoted lover. Every comb, however, is a gift. When a girl wants a new one she brings two annas' worth of silver metal from the bazaar and that

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FIG. 89. Cowrie head-band from Ulera. The cowries are attached to a cord made of carefully woven sago palm fibre
(*See p. 386*)

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night goes to comb the hair of the boy from whom she desires a present. She does his hair with special care and whispers in his ear, 'Look, boy, I have brought some silver, make me a nice comb'. The boy says, 'I don't know how to'. The girl says, 'But of course you know'. Then the boy says, 'Well, what will you give me? Will you....?' The girl says, 'Never', meaning 'Yes', and the boy makes the comb.

In well-disciplined ghotul a boy cannot give a comb to a motiari without the permission of the Kotwar; sometimes it has actually to pass through the Kotwar's hands. For such a gift seems to be regarded as a very definite and important step in the love relations between a boy and girl, and it is considered necessary by the ghotul authorities to keep a check on such intimacies in case there is any scandal or trouble. To this witness some lines in a Paskna Pata from Bandopal:

> Where did you get a comb like that?
> You got it from the embrace of a chelik.
> One comb for once, two combs for twice.

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If a comb is lost or broken, the chelik must make a new one. Otherwise his motiari says, 'How can I comb his hair?' If the Kotwar hears about it, he orders the boy to make one, and he does so at once.

Most combs are made of mahua or karraha wood. Implements used in their manufacture are a small saw, ¾" broad and 6" long, rather like a fret-saw; a *hadri* knife; a *hujji* chisel and a *tatti* adze.

The Kotwar of the Phunder ghotul made a comb for me. He took a piece of mahua wood 2' long and 3" broad, supported one end on a bit of wood and gradually planed down one end, first with the adze and then with his knife. He stood it on end and trimmed the top; then with the saw cut a number of slits 1" deep, measuring them with a twig to ensure that they were even He cut them again and again to enlarge the slits, leaving on either side of the wood a space uncut.

Now another boy came and held the wood firmly, and the Kotwar cut off 1½" from the top with his saw, first cutting half through on one side, then turning the wood over and doing it from the other. Finally he broke the piece off and trimmed it with his knife. So far the process had taken half an hour, but the small piece of wood had taken shape as a comb. The boy now spent fifteen minutes shaping the sides, then with his chisel he enlarged the slits again and carefully cleaned the apertures between the spikes. After this, he held the comb in the hollow of his left hand and grasping the chisel firmly in the right and pressing it down hard began to decorate the comb with various patterns. By the time he had finished, he had spent two-and-a-half hours on the work, the greater part of the time being spent on the decoration.

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The next morning the Kotwar went to a wild fig tree to extract its sticky, milky gum. He struck a branch with the blunt end of his axe and caught some drops of gum in a leaf-cup. He brought this back and sat down by a fire. He spread the gum on either side of the comb with a bit of straw, warmed it on the fire, applied more gum, laid the silver paper over it and rubbed it in hard with the handle of his chisel till the pattern showed. He repeated the process on the opposite side toasting the comb before the fire by sticking it on the end of his chisel. Finally he brought out the pattern clearly by pressing in the silver paper with his own finger-nails, and washed it with a straw dipped in water.

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in his place. The Belosa of Berma was removed because she was too slack to control the girls.

I have only once heard of a boy being removed from office for abusing his sexual privileges. In Sonawal the Diwan seduced another chelik's 'wife'. The others fined him, but he refused to pay, saying, 'I am your master, I am not going to pay a fine to my "subjects"'. He and his own wife, the Diwanin, or head of the girls, were both degraded and made 'subjects'.

IV

We now turn to breaches of the sexual conventions of the ghotul. Here, according to the type of ghotul, two opposite types of offence are recognized.

In those ghotul where there is a rule against 'pairing off', boys and girls are punished if they sleep together too often. The Subedar and Silo of the Binjhli ghotul were fined four annas each for sleeping together every day. In these ghotul too it is considered very bad form for a boy to be 'possessive' about a girl, to be jealous over her and claim her as his. 'We must change every two or four days, or we are fined.'

But in the other type of ghotul, boys and girls are fined for committing what may be called 'ghotul adultery'. A case of this has already been described in Chapter XI. If a chelik sleeps with another boy's motiari during her 'husband's' absence, he is fined. If the Kotwar 'finds the cloth of a girl' who is not the boy's 'mate' on his mat, he reports the matter and the boy is punished.

In villages where there are separate ghotul for boys and girls, they may be fined for visiting one another on days when this is taboo. In Lihagaon, where there were separate dormitories for boys and girls, some years ago the Likhen of the boys was Lamhada to the Mularo of the girls. One night she came to the boys' ghotul and slept with him—a double impropriety since engaged couples are not supposed to sleep together in the ghotul. He was fined a rupee by the chelik, but refused to pay, and on the third day ran away with the girl whom he had already made pregnant. They were brought back and fined two rupees. This time they paid up, and the ghotul members agreed to the marriage and said they would attend it.

With all the freedom of the ghotul, there is a strict insistence on decorum and modesty. It is remarkable that at weddings when the older women and men behave with a complete lack of restraint, abusing each other and catching hold of each other in the most obscene manner, the motiari are never molested. The chelik are sometimes punished for showing an indecent interest in the girls even in the ghotul. Once at Palari the girls were dancing the Durpa Dandi, or Lotus Stalk Dance, when each girl rests one leg on her neighbour's waist. It is considered a rather risky dance and the girls rarely perform it in public. The Kandki of the ghotul sat down near the dancers and tried to peep up in a rather unpleasant manner. The girls stopped dancing and took him inside the ghotul. 'What were you sitting down for?' 'Nothing.' 'You wanted to look at us, you dirty little beast, so we're going to punish you.' They tied his hands together and bound them to the roof for fifteen minutes. When he was released, he had to salute each of the girls in turn and beg forgiveness.

V

How does the machinery of ghotul justice work? How are its punishments inflicted? I will give one or two actual examples before proceeding to tabulate the penalties.

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passion and the passion of the female. Throughout nature sexual conjugation only takes place after much expenditure of energy.'[1] And so the ghotul evening usually begins with vigorous dances and games, many of them frankly provocative of the sexual emotions. The splendid parade of the Mandri dance, the intimacies of the Hulki, the suggestiveness of some of the games are invaluable as a preparation for tumescence. There is a proverb *Rela rela bonde pala*—'If you start with singing Rela you end with the satisfaction of desire'. It must be noted that it is not only the chelik who by the energy of their display excite the motiari; the girls' games and dances are equally powerful stimulants. In one of these games, the girls bend forward, each holding a stick in her hand to represent a penis, and dance with jerky movements of the buttocks that closely simulate the sexual process. As they dance they sing,

Nān nān chingro,	Little little prawn hairs,
Bare lām hinta,	Very long thorn,
Kaha gai ho,	Where has he gone,
Nandpurihār Rāja?	The Nandpurihar Raja?

The 'little prawn hairs' are the pubic hairs and the long thorn is the penis of the chelik. In the Jhoria Endanna, the girls also sing songs about sexual congress.

V

We have already seen, particularly in Chapter XI, something of the scope of sexual opportunity offered by the ghotul as also the limitations it imposes on the normal process of sexual selection. Under these conditions do the chelik and motiari really 'fall in love'? What happens to the tenderness of devotion, the tensions and despairs of passion, the idealizing of the adored object which is still, to the majority of Europeans, essential to any proper relationship between the sexes? Or does life in the ghotul, as Dalton said of the Uraon dormitory, 'sadly blunt all innate feelings of delicacy'?

It is possible that the Muria, in the diffused tenderness of corporate affection, in their simple and natural view of sexual congress, in their rational and realistic attitude to one another, have achieved something better than the sentimental raptures of the lover in the novelette 'sighing like furnace' for an impossible ideal.

Many chelik and motiari seem to pass through their ghotul period without any very passionate love-affairs, content and happy with the ghotul tradition of love. Others, in the course of their seven or eight ghotul years, experience one or two vivid and exciting adventures which may last only a few months and which interrupt but illuminate the general course of their less intense amours. Others again, of a different temperament, are always falling in love and out of it, coveting other cheliks' 'wives', arranging to meet girls outside in the forest or visiting them when the others are asleep. 'Love often makes us break the rules,' said a chelik at Kuntpadar.

For across the calm sea of unstrained, unfrustrated affection, there blow sudden gales and storms. A new girl comes to the village; a boy suddenly awakes to the charm of a motiari he has known for years; a chelik displays himself as a popular hero and draws every heart; little girls and boys grow up

[1] Havelock Ellis, *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse*, p. 32. The sex-dance of the sub-human primates 'consists of an erect swaggering waddle quite different from the usual mode of locomotion. No doubt its function is to intimidate and prepare the female for sexual submission to the dominant male.'—Clifford Allen, *The Sexual Perversions and Abnormalities* (Oxford, 1940), p. 27. See also H. Bingham, *The Sex Development in Apes* (Baltimore, 1928).

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and in their maturity reveal new opportunities. Chelik and motiari are then disturbed, devastated, broken just like anyone else; they fall in love. 'The best love is the first; that is the work of a madman. The rest is the result of an arrangement.' How do boys set about satisfying their passion? And even when it is far less intense than this, how do they approach a new girl whom they desire to win? How do they even persuade the girl with whom they regularly sleep to allow them consummation—for in most ghotul, though a girl is bound to sleep with one of the chelik, she need not have congress with him unless she wants to.

Love-making begins, said a chelik at Bandopal, 'with laughing, smiling and dancing together. Then we arrange to meet in the fields or forest, perhaps by a stream. The boy gives her a carved comb. She steals a little money from her parents, and buys beads to make him a necklace. When it is dark she gives it to him. He wears it at night, but in the day he keeps it carefully hidden.'

In the remote approach to the beloved, gifts play an important part. The chelik make hair-pins, wooden blocks for the back hair, pretty little combs and small tobacco-pouches. The motiari respond with bead-necklaces, head-bands, ear-pendants, and even mats. Mirrors are popular gifts on either side. The gift of a comb is regarded as a sign that one's intentions are really serious; in some ghotul it may not be given directly, but must pass through the Kotwar's hands so that he may keep a check on ghotul romance. Some girls accumulate a great number of these ornaments; it does not necessarily mean that they have many, but rather that they have devoted, lovers. The Likhen of Kanhargaon made twelve combs for his beloved Surtao; when she danced, she used to remove them and give them to him for safe keeping.

[831] Many of these gifts promote a chelik's suit not only by pleasing the girl, but by a more direct solicitation. The boys carve tiny symbols of the vagina or of a penis in erection, they draw breasts and even the pimples round the areola. They make these drawings or carvings on combs or tobacco pouches, and on the walls or pillars of the ghotul and on trunks of trees in the forest. Sometimes they carve breasts on the wooden pillows they use at night. These symbols, they say, often make it easier to open a conversation.

When girls fall in love with boys, they show their devotion by doing things for them. They take their dirty clothes to the stream for washing. They do their hair with special attention. They carry their drums. They bring secret presents of liquor or tobacco from their homes. They go to the jungle for little gifts of fruit. Such attentions quickly win the chelik's heart.

The pangs and sorrows of frustrated love are rarely, I think, experienced. Even where desire is strong, it is tempered by the great range of sexual opportunity. 'Is there a lack of tigers in the jungle?' A girl who is attracted by a boy but who, for some reason, cannot win him, says philosophically enough, 'What is the use of rice in someone else's grain-bin?' and finds another lover. A boy says, 'If not today, I will plough the field tomorrow'.

VI

Such is the remote approach to what the Muria regard as the really important thing in human relations, sexual congress. We must now consider the more immediate approach to this critical and definite expression of love, without which no friendship can be real.

Motiari are often shy and unwilling; they are afraid of pregnancy; sometimes they are just not interested in that particular boy; they are well aware

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of the seductive power of modesty. None of the evidence suggests that congress in the ghotul is readily achieved. It is not a place where girls are 'easy'; a chelik has no harder work than this.

A very important ghotul tradition is that a chelik must not rush a girl. It is considered improper to have intercourse with a motiari the first time you sleep with her—though doubtless there are offenders against this exacting code. A boy must approach a girl carefully and with respect; he must ensure that she is emotionally prepared for him; it is a sin to have intercourse before the girl is 'ready'. How many civilized people regulate their lives with such wisdom?

A chelik in Atargaon was in love with a girl for months, but she always repelled him. He took her to the Dhawadai bazaar and on the way begged her to be kind. She still refused, fearing he would make her pregnant. At last he gave her two bottles of liquor, and even then she only yielded when he solemnly swore to accept the responsibility if there was a child. A former Chalki of Telanga had a similar experience. He was in love with the girl he slept with, but she would never yield to him. He too took her to a bazaar and treated her to liquor and parched rice. She said, 'Your heart and mine are one; surely I will give you all you want. But now if I become pregnant, I shall have to carry a load that should be borne by two bullocks, not by one. If you promise to share the load, you can do what you will.' The Chalki promised; she gave herself to him; within a year she had conceived; and the boy kept his word and married her.

I will now quote a few documents, which are so much more valuable than general statements, about the immediate approach to intercourse. Each describes the first contact of the boy with that particular girl. At Munjmeta a chelik described how,

> If a peasant leaves his village and comes to another, his sons and daughters enter the new ghotul. If the new chelik can find a girl who has no partner [this is one of the ghotul where boys and girls are 'married'], he sleeps with her, taking her in his arms but doing no more. The next day he touches her breasts, and that day and the next he plays with her, tickling, stroking, fondling till he is sure she will not mind. She may still stop him doing anything for a day or two more. Then after a time, he excites her greatly; when all are asleep, he touches her knees, he pushes them a little; if she doesn't cry out, he opens them, he undoes her pubic cloth, and goes to her.

Another account comes from Kapsi, a beautiful village under the shadow of the Abujhmar Hills.

> We never try to have a girl the first day we sleep with her. We play with her first, and only when she is ready and excited do we go to her. It happens like this. After some days of sleeping together the chelik says to his motiari, 'We have slept together for such a long time now; won't you let me eat your tobacco?' The motiari replies, 'But I haven't any tobacco; how can I give you what I haven't got?' He says, 'O yes you have, only you're hiding it somewhere'. She says now, 'I've never done it; I don't know what to do'. If she goes on refusing, he gets angry and says, 'For so many days you have slept on my mat; you have warmed yourself with my blanket; I have given you combs and rings, and all the world knows I love you. But after tonight don't sleep with me again. My life is hurt. Yet for many days my life was in you.' Then he turns his back on her and pushes

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her off his mat. When that happens she soon becomes sorry and flings her arms round him saying, 'Why are you angry? We are always together; we will meet tomorrow'. Later, when all are asleep, she opens her cloth and lets him have his way.

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that just as it is the motiari who rule the sexual side and make the sleeping arrangements in the modern type of ghotul, so in both types it is the motiari who take the lead in actual congress. 'When a girl first goes to the ghotul,' said a motiari at Binjhli, 'she is sent to a chelik. She sits down by his mat and says, "Won't you give me a camping-site?" The chelik answers, "Lie down and sleep". The girl is always frightened at first, but she should make no fuss even if it hurts her, for then everyone would hear and laugh. A boy must never ask a girl to sleep with him. It is we who make the arrangements.' 'At first', I was told, 'it is the boy who is shy. But the first long steady look of the motiari encourages him, and afterwards he takes the lead.'

I will give finally a charming record, recorded at Phauda by Shamrao Hivale, of the way a chelik and motiari in love talk to one another.

'All day you were in my eyes,' says the chelik. 'You went to that village, and I kept on looking at it and saying to myself, "She is there".'

'Yes, I went away,' responds the motiari, 'but I felt as if you were just behind me. I could see your shadow by me all the time.'

'All day long I felt as if you were actually talking to me.'

'I said to myself, "Now the sun stands overhead; he must have returned from the jungle with his wood; perhaps he is resting, perhaps he is drinking his *jāwa*".'

'I felt as if I should take you away, and talk to you alone, and never hear anyone else's voice again.'

'I never want to hear anyone else either.'

'Do you know what I did in the afternoon, when you had come home and then gone out fishing? I was ploughing, but I felt I must look at you, so I left my plough and hid under a bush by the river. There I could see you fishing and I felt very happy. After a little while I went back to my plough.'

VII. The Sexual Act

Kosra ke kāte asan Muria ke lote. As is the reaping of millet, so is the intercourse of the Muria.—Muria proverb

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In the ghotul there is no ceremony of sexual initiation, no formal rite of defloration, no permission (save in a few ghotul) is needed from the leaders for the first or any other intercourse. 'Desire is not controlled by rules, nor is our copulation.'

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From their earliest days in the ghotul the little chelik and motiari play together until gradually, imperceptibly the vaginal entrance is enlarged and the hymen disappears without a tear. 'We used to behave,' said Nari, 'exactly like little bulls and cows, sporting together till the bull could penetrate.' 'When you sleep with a girl night after night,' said the Antar of Jamkot, 'however small you may be, as long as flesh becomes wood, you try to beat her with it.' And the Budhker of Kapsi described how he quarrelled with his parents and eloped with his still immature wife. 'She was too young, and for a long time I only played with her and was quite happy with that till she was mature.'

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For it is not considered proper for the older boys to have congress with a motiari till she has passed the menarche. 'Real happiness only comes when you are both mature. Of course the kids do it, but without the falling of water there's little pleasure. It is like eating a raw fruit. There is no sweetness in it. It is like rice without salt.' This judgement comes from Kajen; another is from Kabonga. 'To try to have a girl before she is mature is as hard as for a pig to dig up roots. Sometimes it manages it; it gets the root up and enjoys it. But it prefers its ordinary food.' The Kotwar of Temrugaon said, 'The first time I did it was with a little girl and it was very painful. She didn't like it either. One ought not to dig in the field of an immature girl, for one's *pulu* (digging-stick) may get damaged.'

But after a girl's first menstruation, said Raunu of Jhakri, 'everyone plans to be the first'. Even now, however, the girl must not be forced or hurried; she must be wooed, persuaded, loved into yielding. Sometimes girls who are afraid of intercourse succeed in resisting the chelik for a long time. Often the first serious sexual experience of a girl is during a marriage, when everyone is excited and perhaps a little drunk, and no one asks questions or notices what is going on.

The ghotul leaders do not interfere unduly with the young children, but they see that they receive proper sexual training and instruction. 'As a young bullock is broken to the plough, so a young boy is taught.' The evidence for this sort of statement is best presented in actual 'documents'. Here is one from Kapsi.

> A big girl teaches a little boy by letting him fondle her breasts and hug her. Then she opens and spreads her legs and makes the little boy lie on her breasts. She shows him how to open her clothes and insert the little penis with his hand. The first time the boy doesn't know what to do and the juice comes out too soon. But the next day she says, 'You only pressed me last night, nothing was done properly. I had no pleasure'. The boy replies, 'Today I'm really ready; now I know what to do'.

In Munjmeta, the Melia recalled how he learnt to perform the sexual act from the very descriptions of the older boys. And in Markabera, the Diwan said,

> A little boy doesn't need to be taught anything. Does a young crab have to be taught how to dig earth? But the elder boys generally tell them how to do it. When the little boys tell them their secrets and how they tried but failed, the older chelik show them the best way. The older girls do the same for the little girls. Sometimes older girls who get fond of little boys teach them themselves. But we learn everything by being in the ghotul. How can the little boys check themselves? Who doesn't feel a desire to eat when he sees people enjoying a feast in his presence?

Thus from a very early age the young chelik and motiari are trained in sexual technique, both by example and by actual instruction. A boy does not approach his marriage bed a virgin, but neither does he go to it a fool.

The immediate sexual approach and the technique of copulation practised by chelik and motiari are conditioned by the circumstances of ghotul life. Normal sexual congress should take place within the ghotul. It is believed that this precaution lessens the chances of conception (there is a 'safe region' rather than a 'safe period'); it protects boy and girl from the calamitous interference of magic; and it imposes a certain degree of restraint and discipline.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

Naturally there are many breaches of the rule; at marriages and festivals, on dancing expeditions and during everyday work in field and forest, chelik and motiari unite in intercourse—but this is regarded as irregular, not exactly condemned, but accepted as outside the routine.

This fact alone is sufficient to make the ghotul tradition almost unique. For here is a company of boys and girls, many of them close relatives, who perform the sexual act in public, often in a single room. For it is public, even though veiled by the mask of darkness and a convention that no one should watch his neighbour. In some of the bigger ghotul, of course, the boys and girls are able to thin out a little; they can scatter in the different huts; in the hot weather they can sleep out in the compound. But during a large part of the year chelik and motiari sleep together in one small smoky room. They do not care to leave the warmth and security of their cosy ghotul for the dangerous and inconvenient discomfort of field or jungle. So we find brothers performing the sexual act before their sisters, and elder brothers in the forbidden presence of their younger brothers' 'wives'. Sometimes they are so crowded together that they have great difficulty in achieving coitus without waking up their neighbours.

For this reason, because intercourse must be with all the secrecy possible, without display and without disturbance, the normal method of copulation inside the ghotul is not unlike the characteristic European method—the girl lies prone on her back, and the boy stretches himself upon her, forcing her legs apart and often raising them to place them round his thighs.

But when the lovers meet outside the ghotul, they are able to indulge more varied postures. At Jhakri the chelik knew of four—the girl prone on her back and the youth kneeling or squatting before her; both sitting and facing one another; the youth prone and fully extended above the girl who sometimes raises her legs and sometimes extends them; and both standing, the girl supported against a tree or wall. At Palari, a chelik said, 'Usually we lie flat, but when a boy is very happy he sits above her.'

A former Sirdar of Singarpuri described the difference between intercourse with a motiari in a crowded ghotul and with one's own wife in a private room. 'To have a motiari is like living on borrowed money; you are always anxious, and afraid someone will notice what you're doing. But with your own wife at home, you can have her lying down, you can have her standing up, you can have her from the front, you can have her from behind. She is like a good crop which you can eat till you can eat no more.'

But copulation *a posteriori* is generally considered improper. There still linger stories probably imaginary, that the soldiers who raped Muria women during the Rebellion of 1911 took them in this way. There is a ribald story current in the Bara Dongar Pargana of a married couple who wearied of the constant publicity and monotony of intercourse in a crowded home.

> So one day the man took her to the jungle and said they would copulate like horses. He persuaded her, though with great difficulty, to become completely naked. He said, 'Now you lean forward and when I come to you from behind, making love-noises like a horse, you must kick me with one leg'. But they had both forgotten that she was wearing heavy anklets with sharp edges, and when she kicked, one of these cut his lip open, and it has not yet completely healed.

A more tragic, though equally ribald, tale comes from Gormi.

> A husband saw a pair of cranes copulating as he was going home drunk from the liquor-shop. He said in his mind, 'That's how I'll do it tonight'.

THE MURIA'S ATTITUDE TO SEX

So thinking, he tied a sickle to his nose as a beak, bound a winnowing-fan on each arm, put a broom on his bottom. There he was, a bird. He mounted his wife from behind, flapping his wings and crying *kar-kar-kar*. But he knocked over a lamp, set fire to the house and was burnt to death.

A chelik and motiari generally agree to have congress at the time of the massage. When the girl lays the chelik's hand on her shoulder so that she can massage his arm, he squeezes it in a certain manner. This is how the Kotwar of Chandabera described it.

They have agreed on it. They lie down together on the mat. He has his hand on her breast, but that means nothing. When all are asleep, he makes the sign. I cannot tell you what it is, but we all know it. She says 'Go away' but he knows she means yes. He doesn't kiss her or touch any part of her, save her breasts and shoulders. He raises himself and separates her legs. She at once unties her cloth. When he is on her, she puts his organ in its place with her hand. She says nothing, nor does he. They are very quiet. He must do it hard; unless you sweat, unless your rut (*masti*) leaves you, you are not satisfied. She says, 'Push on, push on (*alena, alena*)'. She won't let him go till she is satisfied. At last the word *Hai* comes from both their lips. They are no more drunken. *Eko lela hende raiyār ashe hong dayār*. When it goes out through her ears, her temper is cooled.

Bindo, the old Muria of Benur, recalled a love affair of sixty years ago.

I used to sleep with the Malko in the ghotul. Though she would be lying by my side, I did not go to her at first, for I was the head of the ghotul and thought I oughtn't to. But after two or four days, Malko caught hold of my penis and put it between her thighs. Even then I did nothing. Then the girl got very angry and refused to sleep with me for some days. But at last she came again to my mat and this time I went to her. After that we often had intercourse together.

This elementary form of masturbation by girls is known as *dinga-dinga* and seems to be common. But it must be noted that it is a preparation for normal intercourse and not (as so often in Africa) a substitute for it. In Masora the chelik said that 'when a motiari wants a boy, she catches hold of his penis and plays with it till he goes to her'.

The function of the clitoris is not unknown. It is usually prominently portrayed in drawings or carvings of the vagina. Its history is traced in the myths. To the male storyteller, it is a slightly ludicrous object, a parody of the penis, and a mention of it never fails to raise a laugh. In intercourse, said a Muria at Sirpuri, 'the clitoris becomes violently agitated when it sees the penis approaching'. The Antar of Masora said, 'When it sees the penis coming, the clitoris smiles'.

The Muria believe it is the woman who takes the lead and sets the pace. A curious illustration of this is the fact that, contrary to what I believe to be the almost universal practice in village India, the girl herself undoes her pubic cloth.[1] Elsewhere this is considered immodest in a girl and unmanly in her

[1] 'The folds of the sari which are tied in the front are called *tirani*, which is a very significant word in Indian love-making. The knot of the sari is to be untied by the man when the lovers unite.'—D. Bhagwat, *Folk-songs from the Satpura Valleys* (Bombay, 1940), p. xx.

837 has to divine who is the guilty party in order that peace may be made and danger averted.

783 Adultery therefore is not only the betrayal of tribal fellowship, the infringement of another's right to property, a breach of sexual tradition, but it is highly dangerous. A sort of public apology has to be made to the betrayed husband and a ceremony of purification performed.

In order to avert their fate, once the matter has become public, the guilty pair go to the Gaita with a pig or goat which he offers to the local deities and the Departed. Then he goes with witnesses to the nearest tank. On a stone he puts two bits of broken earthenware and some dub grass. Everyone present puts one foot on the stone; the Gaita throws water and liquor over the guilty pair who cry, 'Let us not now swell with water. May the Yer Kanyang living in the midst of this water make an end of our sin (*pāp*)'. The seducer then greets the woman's husband and all is forgiven.[1]

X983 A similar ceremony is performed in the *jodidār* ghotul if a chelik goes off with another boy's motiari, or if he sleeps with her in his absence. At Atargaon, ●836 where a chelik eloped with another's ghotul-wife, but was brought back after a few days, the ghotul Manjhi took the two 'husbands' out of the village to 783 a place where two paths crossed. He made them stand on either side of the path and put a knife on the ground and above the knife a stone. He made the boys put their right feet on the stone and gave them each seven leaf-cups of water. Seven times they exchanged the cups of water and seven times cups of liquor, and swore to preserve friendship with one another. The seducer promised to pay a heavy fine if it happened again.

X883 There is one type of adultery, however, which does not seem to be taken too seriously. 'Suppose a girl has a ghotul lover.' So they put it at Markabera. 836 'She elopes with him. They are brought back and she is quickly married to her betrothed. After a few weeks she runs away again to her lover. She 837 is again brought back, again accepted by her husband, though he knows she has slept with her old lover. And then she is happy at last and settles down.' 'It is like getting a new cow,' said the chelik at Nayanar. 'She does not at first like her new home. She runs back to the herd and her former pastures. But we don't beat her for that; we are rather doubly kind.'

In dealing with a motiari-wife, that is not only kind; it is intelligent.

VII. Divorce

586 Throughout tribal India divorce is easy and generally the wife has the same rights as her husband. Among the Muria divorce on either side is possible, but the stability of their marriage tradition makes it a comparatively rare event. I have already described how divorce can be effected in a *jodidār* ghotul. Similar ceremonies can release a woman from her partner in adult life. These ceremonies, it must be observed, are essentially rites of purification; they are retrospective, having reference to an already existing state of affairs. The actual union with a new partner and the paying of compensation effects the divorce; now husband and wife have to be free, not of each other—for they are that already—but of the dangers that cling to the conduct of one or both.

The ceremonies are the same as those by which a couple taken in adultery are cleared of their fault. Whether the woman returns to her own husband

[1] A similar ceremony is performed to purify a boy who sleeps with a near relative in the ghotul, but in this case a root or cucumber is used instead of a goat for sacrifice.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

CHAPTER SIX

THE CAUSES OF CRIME: MARITAL INFIDELITY

I

§36 [157] The Maria allow their women a great deal of freedom in their pre-nuptial period, but for matrimonial relationships they have a strict regard. They are jealous and possessive by temperament, passionate as lovers,[1] suspicious and

[301]

Maria girls' neck-band

exacting husbands. Divorce is rare; adultery is dangerous, a crime the end of which cannot be foreseen.

§37 Adultery is dangerous, for unless proper precautions are taken the ancestors of the household and the clan-god may

[1] But as elsewhere in India 'lust-murder' does not occur. 'Lust-murder, as one of the phenomena of psychopathia sexualis, appears to be better known in the more highly cultured countries of the West than in the East, where capital offences have their basis in less recondite mental processes'. S. M. Edwardes, *Crime in India* (Oxford, 1924), p. 28.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria
Murin

674 Murders committed on account of an unwelcome and
336 unexpected pregnancy are not common, because of the
[348] high standard of domestic morals among the Maria and because if an unmarried girl is found pregnant, she is immediately married and the child is thus legitimized. But there is one authentic case in which a man was driven to kill his lover, though it may be said that it was her stupidity rather than her pregnancy that caused the tragedy. Mase was the wife of a man who deserted her for the Tea Gardens, leaving her alone and unsupported with three little children. She used to make some sort of living as a coolie. But presently Poriami Hirma fell in love with her and used constantly to visit her in her house, although he never officially kept her as his wife. In time she became pregnant and a panchayat was called to consider the matter. The elders decided to send information to Mase's husband's elder brother, an ex-convict and a harsh violent man, of whom the girl was greatly afraid.

Early in the morning of Tuesday, 21 February 1933, Mase left her three children in the house and went to tell Hirma what had happened. She expected that her husband's elder brother would come that day and beat her and she suggested that Hirma should run away with her and hide. Hirma agreed and they went some way into the jungle and sat down under a tamarind tree. The weather was cold and they lit a fire, beside which they sat and talked. Mase was very frightened and depressed. She wept and threatened to kill herself. Hirma very properly asked her to come and live with him as his wife, and promised to look after her and the children. But the girl, who was obviously in

[674 seduced Kande's first wife, and the proper ceremonies of purification
684] had been conducted. But when Kande took another wife, the father again attempted or, as some say, succeeded in seducing her, and this time there was a violent quarrel between father and son while they were catching birds in the jungle. The father actually complained to his son that the girl did not respond properly to his advances. Kande was assaulted by his father and killed him in return. When I saw this boy in jail a year later, the extraordinary sadness of his face contrasted strikingly with the expression of many of the more regular criminals. The villagers concealed the crime and when it was by chance discovered five months later, were very backward in co-operating with the police. Obviously as in the Mundra case, they considered it a very proper murder. But Kande was not so fortunate as Mundra and was sentenced not to a month, but to five years' imprisonment. This was later reduced to three years, and he was released in 1943.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

674 With these cases we may compare the tragic destiny of
583 Dome, a young unmarried Dhurwa girl aged about seventeen. A youth called Joga had been living as her Lamhada for the past five years, and their marriage had been arranged to take place at the next harvest. Dome did not care for Joga, but like any other Maria girl she was prepared to follow her parents' wishes in regard to her marriage and become his wife.

[513] One night the girl found herself alone in her house. Joga was not supposed to sleep indoors, but outside in the courtyard. The girl went to bed and shut the door of her room. Late that night Joga went to her and asked her to have sexual intercourse with him. She refused, saying that, if she did, the gods would be angry with her and her cattle would die, and Joga went away. Fearing that the boy might ravish her, she got her axe and kept it by her side. Presently she fell sleep and again Joga came into the house and caught hold of her. She started up and struck him a violent blow with her axe, making a deep wound from which he died in a few minutes.

The Court held that Dome had acted according to her right of self-defence when she was unprotected in the house at dead of night. It is not known why Dome rejected her [834] future husband, for it is not really a very common habit among girls for whom Lamhada are serving. It is possible that she was in her menstrual period, a thought that is suggested by her saying that the gods would be angry and the cattle die if she had intercourse. On the other hand, it may merely be that she disliked the boy and did not wish to have anything to do with him until she had to after marriage.

Another Lamhada, who is now serving a sentence of life imprisonment in Jagdalpur, is Khuja, a Muria boy from Esalnar. He is a cheerful and rather stupid youth who, when he described his crime to me, laughed heartily at what he considered the amusing bits. Khuja was living with his father-in-law and though the girl was very young had already been married to her. One day a Ghasia beggar woman came to the house and said to him, 'Come along boy'. He asked her what she wanted him for, and she replied, 'For your wife's head'. A fortnight later she came again and complain-